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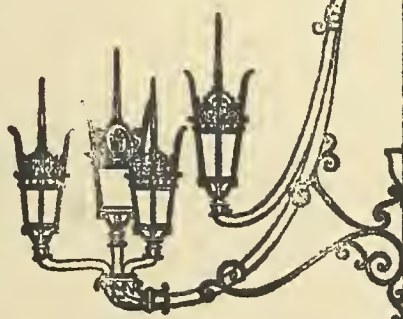
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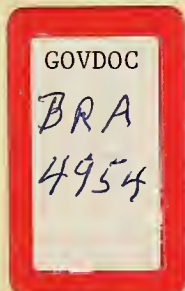


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BACK BAY 1972-1973  
Back Bay Association  
Back Bay Federation for Community Development





## Back Bay Federation for Community Development

419 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MASS. 02116  
TELEPHONE: 267-8070

### THE BRIGHT IMAGE OF HIGH QUALITY

What is the image of Back Bay? We know what it should be. An image of superb architecture, lovely homes, vital institutions. . .exciting shops, fine hotels, gourmet restaurants. . .concert halls, art galleries and green parks.

Is it possible to maintain such quality in this period of urban crises? Perhaps, but only in a very few places in all of America. Back Bay is one of these special places.

The Back Bay Association (BBA) is the organization dedicated to building and maintaining this quality here.

1972 was basically a good year: the magnificent new Library Addition opened and the Copley Plaza Hotel returned. The exciting conversions of the Vendome and Somerset are now moving ahead. The plan for ICA is set.

BBA and you can make 1973 an even more successful year.

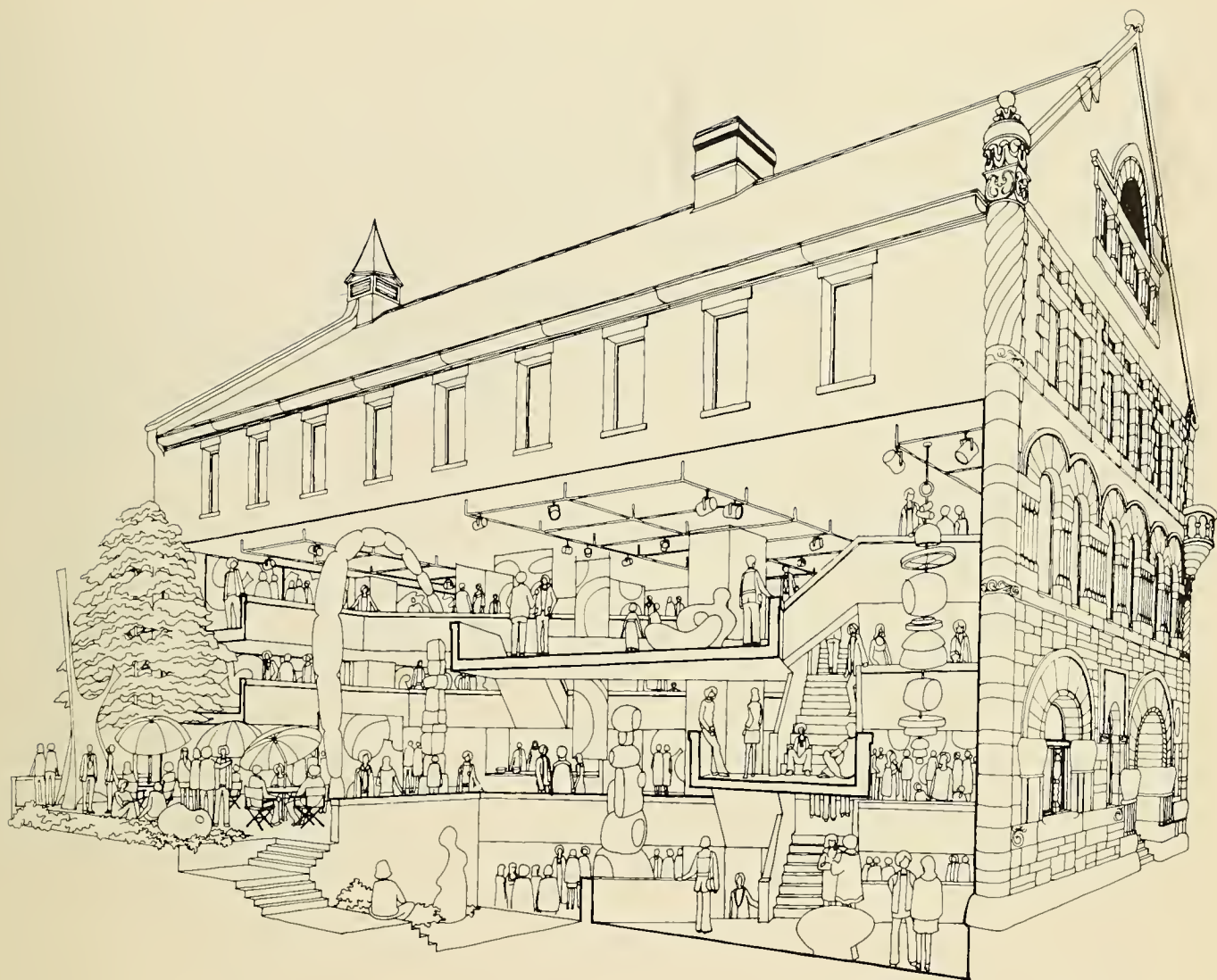
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Note: This report covers the last fiscal year of BBA ending January 31, 1973.

BACK BAY



ASSOCIATION, INC.  
419 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MASS. 02116  
TELEPHONE 266-1766



CONTENTS /

I MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AREAS

II BOYLSTON - NEWBURY STREETS

III ARCHITECTURAL DISTRICT

IV OTHER AREAS

V CULTURAL REVIVAL

Park Square

For years now Park Square has been on the threshold of major renewal. The need for renewal is obvious and the pressures for regeneration are mounting. There have been several good proposals made for the area of which the most ambitious is BRA's Park Plaza Urban Renewal Project.

This project was approved by the BRA Board, Mayor White, and the City Council in 1971. However, it was rejected by the State Department of Community Affairs in June, 1972. A revised version has been resubmitted and is now under review by the State.

Principal features of the plan are:

- 800 to 1000 room Western International Hotel.
- 1600 apartments, mostly in the luxury range.
- 500,000 sq. ft. of retail space in a handsome galleria.
- 1,000,000 sq. ft. of office space.
- 3000 parking spaces.

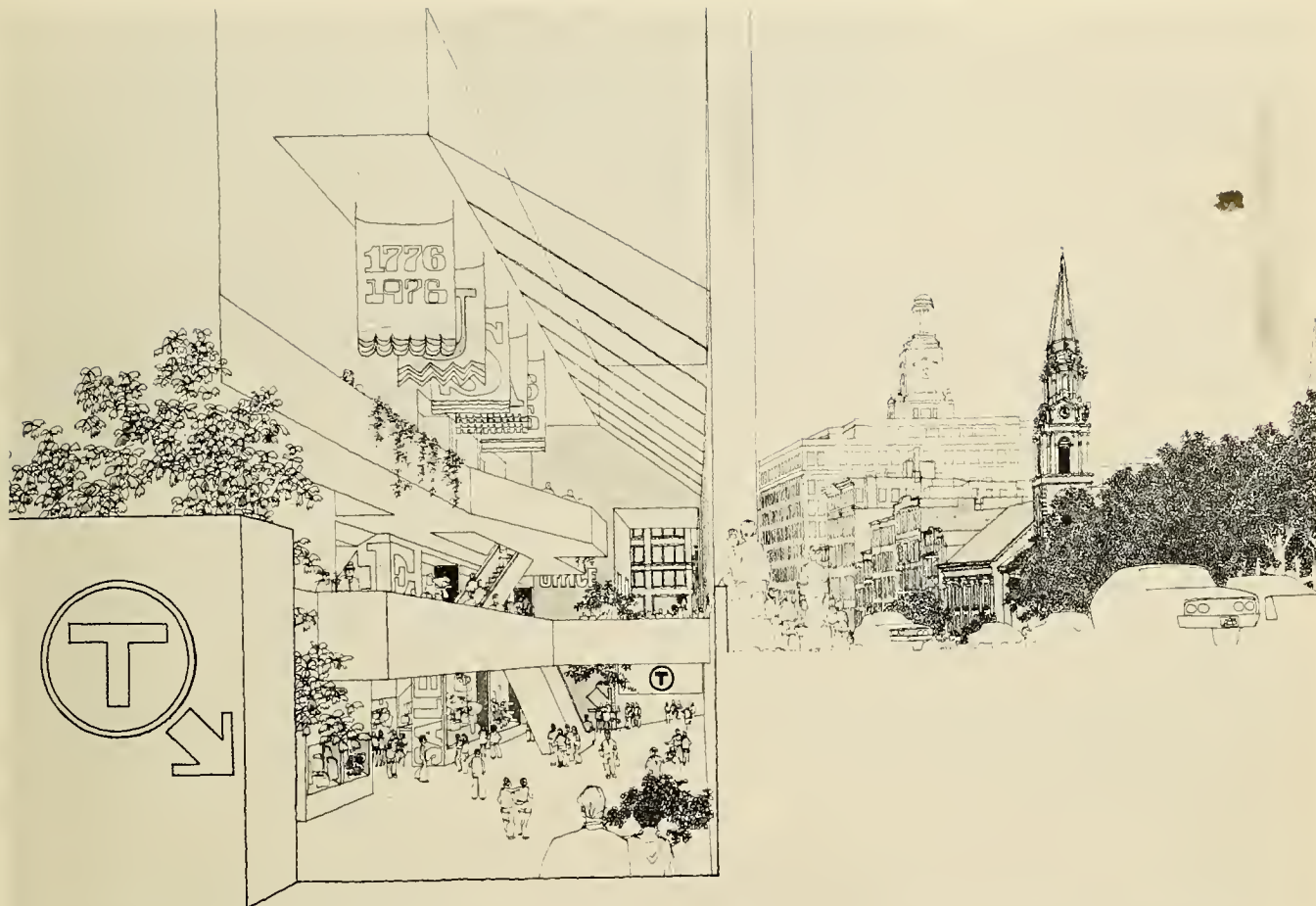
The developer for this plan is Boston Urban Associates and the architect is Davis and Brody.

The development should have a very positive effect on the surrounding areas, the Boylston-Newbury Street shopping area, and the Public Garden. But this will not happen automatically. Careful controls will be required and for that reason BBA has insisted on a Project Area Committee through which BBA and other groups would have an important role in the future planning of the project.

If Park Plaza is approved, we expect that the people and business corporations of the Back Bay will have such a role in further planning and development to make sure that the project reaches its maximum potential.

If Park Plaza is rejected, then BBA--which has a permanent commitment to the renewal of this area--will then collaborate with other groups in launching a new program of rejuvenation of the Park Square area.





Above: Cutaway view of the shopping galleria proposed in the Park Plaza Plan. This view looks westward along Boylston St. with the Arlington Street Church and New England Life in the background.

.....

### John Hancock Complex

The John Hancock Tower has made the news recently as high winds have blown out and damaged glass panes in this innovative "mirror building". As a result, occupancy is delayed but is expected sometime during 1973.

The Tower will house John Hancock personnel and also several tenants including Boston Gas, Century Life, Ernst & Ernst, and Merrill Lynch.

Mamma Leone's opened in 1972 and the 1800-space Hancock Garage is now in full operation.

The Back Bay Federation and other groups have been working with Hancock on proposals for the spacious "Pavillion" area. Although no firm plans have yet been adopted, the possibilities are quite extraordinary.

The Hancock Complex, Prudential Center, and the Back Bay Railroad Station may be focal points in Boston's Bicentennial celebration. One of the most magnetic features will be the imaginatively programmed observation deck planned for the Hancock Tower to open toward the end of 1973, or early in 1974.

### Prudential Center

This was another busy year at Prudential Center with its continuing programs of activities related to the arts, crafts, horticulture, along with concerts, ice skating and other events.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority approved the application for a major hotel addition (29 stories, 430 rooms) in the Center. Construction will begin early in 1973 with a completion date scheduled for mid 1975.

The hotel addition at Prudential, plus a proposed new hotel facility nearby on Dalton Street, plus the Western International Hotel in Park Plaza should combine to insure that the Back Bay will continue to be the center of good hotel facilities in the Boston area.

### Church Center and Fenway Redevelopment

Given the delays and problems inherent in the urban renewal process, this project is making very striking progress. Two buildings were opened in 1971, three additional structures will open early in 1973 with the sixth building to be occupied in mid 1973.

The Church Center is now taking form (see cover photo) and will be functioning on a large scale by June of this year when the mall and fountain are fully operating and the three adjacent buildings will be occupied.

Included is the Sunday School building which opens late in 1971, the Colonnade building which is now being occupied, and the high-rise Administration building which should be completed by June. Work on the Church Center will continue with completion expected in 1975.



Perimeter development on Massachusetts and Huntington Avenues includes the Colonnade Hotel which opened in 1971 and two residential buildings: Church Park, the City's largest apartmenthouse with 508 units and Morville House (147 units) both of which will be open for occupancy this winter.

1973 should see the start of two new structures on Huntington Avenue: one for 319 middle-income units and one for 387 low and moderate rental apartments. Also in 1973 land assembly should commence for the large apartment tower and retail development on Parcel 13, at the southwest intersection of Boylston Street and Massachusetts Avenue.

This schedule is subject to the delays inherent in the urban renewal process plus some additional problems such as a pending lawsuit by opponents of the project. Nevertheless, the outlook is for continued progress in 1973.

The 1700 apartments described above will mean a solid contribution to Back Bay's housing inventory with a healthy diversity of units in low, moderate and middle income categories. Church Park has apartments at all three rental levels. Morville House is low and moderate rental. The next two buildings will provide 319 middle income units along with 387 low and moderate rental dwellings.

## II BOYLSTON-NEWBURY STREETS

This was a year of upswing for retailing on Boston's two finest commercial streets--Boylston and Newbury. An impressive resurgence had commenced at Copley Square. Interest was mounting in the concept of area promotion. A Cultural Revival (see page 17) was moving ahead.

### Copley Square

Bracketed by architectural masterpieces on the east and west, and by handsome new commercial towers (Hancock and Kanavos) on the north and south, Copley Square is once again a vital focus of cultural and business life for the metropolis.

The resurgence of Copley Square has been led by the magnificent new Library Addition designed by the noted architect, Philip Johnson. The Addition, which houses a half million books, was opened in December.

Simultaneously, the Copley Plaza Hotel returned bringing with it glorious traditions from the past. This outstanding hostelry is being handsomely refurbished. The elegant custom of tea in the palm court has been restored after a lapse of decades. An exciting new restaurant will open in the Spring, and there will also be an outdoor cafe, bicycle rentals, and horse-drawn carriages to ride around the park.



The Square itself received improved landscaping last summer and was bubbling with activity, thanks to Summerthing and BBA's Copley Square Committee Chairman, Helene Cooper Johnson. Noontime theatre and a tennis match with Billie Jean King and Mayor White (see page 10) were two of the many events.

#### Newcomers

The Institute of Contemporary Art has announced its plans to open its new headquarters on Boylston Street. In 1972, there was a parade of new retailers coming into the Back Bay including these:

Malben's  
Lady Madonna  
Harold Ernst Gallery  
O's Antiques  
Sugar and Spice  
Sorcerer's Apprentice  
Blondies

Mariposa  
Plant Parenthood  
Rug Gallery  
The Optical Shoppe  
Pierre Deux  
Beckies of Boston  
Piaf Parfumerie



Meanwhile, several retailers expanded. Decor International, Dorfman's, and Paperback Booksmith are all in impressive new quarters. Other businesses and restaurants on the way include Magic Pan and the Greenhouse.

### Area Promotion

Prudential Center, as usual, led the way with a strong promotional year culminating in a giant Christmas celebration. BBA added a sophisticated program of Christmas lighting at Copley Square and a very well received brochure, "Back Bay Christmas".

There was the Newbury Street Open House, and the Civic Center and Clearing House produced the "Blue Line" walking tour from the State House to Prudential Center.

But, the most interesting promotional idea yet is "City Charter" which was suggested at the BBA September Annual Meeting, researched, developed and then presented for action at the January 1973 BBA meeting. It is the brainchild of Gerald Bush, Director of Commerce for the City of Boston, and BBA Officers.

Plans call for a March start on a program to bring suburban shoppers into the Back Bay via luxury busses for a day of shopping, luncheon and entertainment. It could produce some very big retail results. Back Bay retailers have been invited to sponsor the program. The price is low and the acceptance is good.

City Charter is an experimental program which could be the beginning of what BBA hopes will be a sustained effort to promote and develop stronger retailing in this area.

### Service Programs

The BBA "Promenade Plan" for Boylston Street continues to advance. It is now complete from Dalton to Clarendon Street and in 1973 should go to Arlington Street. Boylston Street is now one of the best illuminated commercial thoroughfares anywhere.

Boylston Street, from Arlington to Dartmouth, and Copley Square were extraordinarily clean during the warm weather months of 1972, thanks to the excellent maintenance by the Parks Department, the cooperation of the Public Works Department, and BBA's innovative sidewalk Vacuum Cleaning Program.

If there is sufficient response (and there should be), the Vacuum Cleaning Program will continue in 1973.

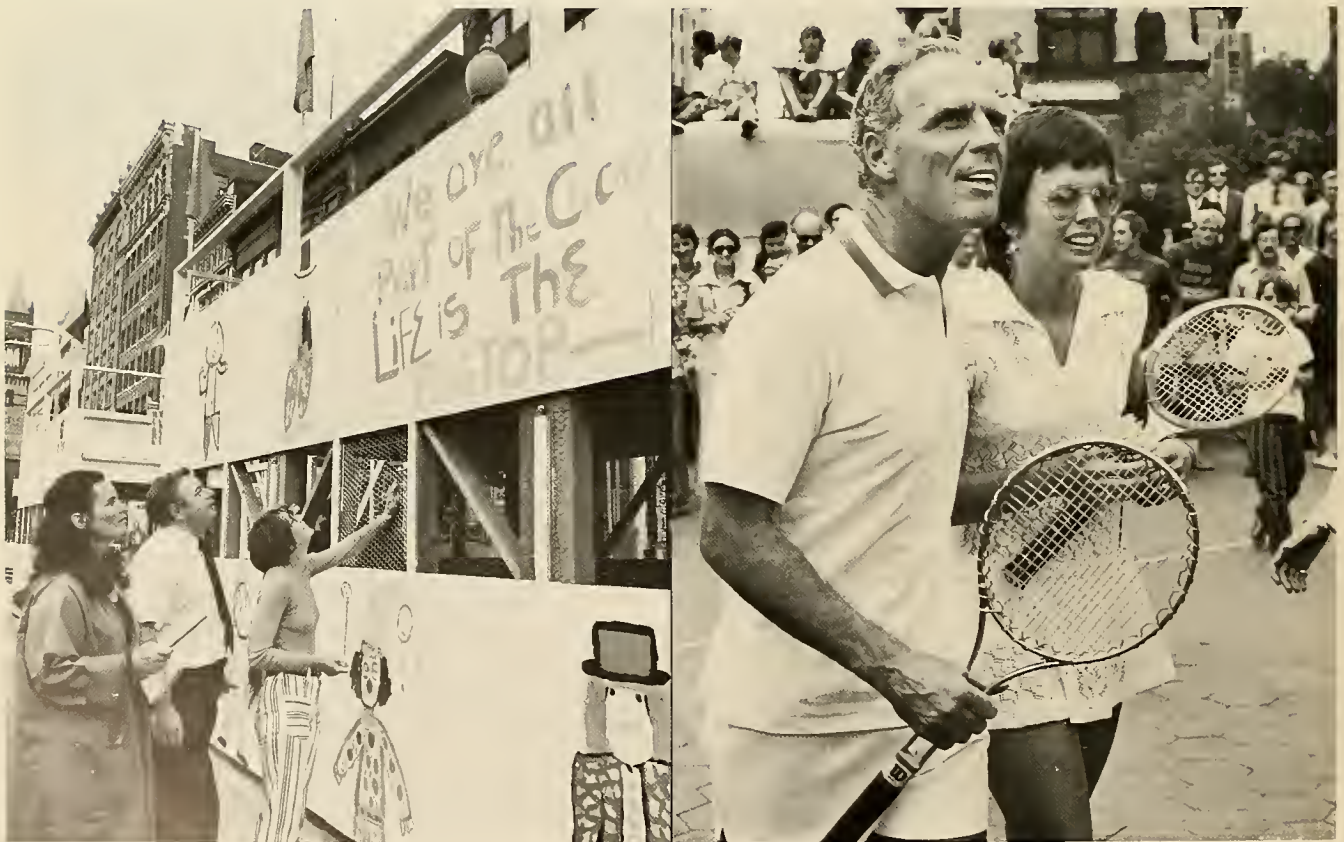


## Sign Control

After a five-year battle, BBA's sign control guidelines have become law. Sign control at last is a fact in the City of Boston.

The Boston Zoning Commission, at the request of the Boston Redevelopment Authority and BBA, has adopted specific sign controls. Although they are essentially the ones recommended in BBA's guidelines, there were--as might be expected--some compromises made. This was necessitated by the opposition of the sign manufacturers and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce.

Nevertheless, the code in effect represents a great step forward and will be enormously beneficial to the Back Bay. Basically, it prohibits new signs on roof tops, on upper stories, and in sidewalks. It sharply limits projecting signs and it provides sensible limits for all other types of signs. All inquiries about the new code should be directed to the BBA office.



## Colleges and Schools

Five years ago Mayor White, BBA and the Federation beat back the effort of U. Mass. to build a new 15,000 student campus at Copley Square. Ever since then, the school population in the Boylston-Newbury Street area has been approximately stable.

In 1972 the New England School of Law purchased the Boston College Intown Center and now occupies that building under an elaborate zoning formula which was developed by BBA for the City and which accommodates the School while strengthening the Newbury Street neighborhood.

This formula, which represents a substantial leap forward in town-gown relationships, has already become a model for similar projects elsewhere. Under this formula the first floor will be used for retailing only. The first tenant is Goddings Pharmacy.

## Transportation

As MBTA riders realize, there is no particular relationship between the enthusiasm of limousine driving public officials for public transit and the conditions that actually exist in the subway. Riders who still have a sense of humor can enjoy the idea of MBTA launching very expensive promotional programs to attract riders to services which are uncomfortably, and perhaps, dangerously overloaded.

Despite this, there is some progress being made in the MBTA system. It is being made very slowly and very expensively, but there is some progress.

MBTA is currently embarked on a \$38 million power boost and track improvement program for the Green Line.

MBTA has ordered approximately 150 modern cars for the Green Line, but this long needed equipment will not be in service until September, 1976 or thereafter.

During the recent Christmas Season MBTA experimented--very badly--with a minibus service. More experiments of this type are needed and BRA is attempting to launch such an effort.

Given the state of transit, travelers to Back Bay will continue to depend on the automobile as their first choice for many years to come and they will do this despite all of the rhetoric from public officials. Fortunately, the parking supply for the Back Bay is better than ever. The opening of the huge new Hancock Garage, plus some other improvements, has made conditions quite good at this time.



### Continuing Campaigns

Every month there are efforts for new fast food restaurants and new liquor licenses. There are pressures for porno sales and movies and peddlers galore. Astounding proposals for gerrybuilt buildings and peculiar enterprises continue to spew forth. BBA is on guard all the time and has been more than 85% successful in knocking down detrimental proposals of all types during the past few years. Fortunately, these victories are not visible. That is to say, no one can see the defeated proposals because they simply are not here. But rest assured that BBA continues to work to protect the area against these potent negative forces.





### III

### ARCHITECTURAL DISTRICT

North of Newbury Street is "Residential Back Bay" within the Back Bay Architectural District. Largely as a result of public controls, this area is steadily recapturing its historic quality as a truly great urban residential neighborhood.

#### Condominiums

The strongest and most beneficial trend in "Residential Back Bay" is the conversion of good apartment buildings to condominiums. This increases ownership, induces stability, and creates a socially more attractive neighborhood.

A year ago there were eleven condominium buildings in the Back Bay. Today there are 25-30 in actuality or in final planning.

Condominium prices have ranged from about \$20,000-\$100,000 with the most popular offering two-bedroom units under \$50,000. However, most condominiums are larger and more expensive.

Compared with apartments, condominiums are considerably larger and depending upon the ultimate owner are usually maintained in a far superior condition.

Back Bay has competition in the condominium field from Beacon Hill, the Waterfront and out of town. Within Boston, Back Bay has a strong edge and tends to offer greater value. As a result, there are more condominiums in the Back Bay than in all of Boston's other neighborhoods taken together.

Signs point to a continuation of a strong condominium trend in the Back Bay.

#### Vendome

For five years the Back Bay civic groups waged an uphill fight to have this building preserved. Pasquale Franchi rescued it and began a very ambitious restoration scheme. Last year there were people enjoying the outdoor cafe on beautiful May evenings. Then came the tragic fire of June which took nine lives and severely damaged the building.

Mr. Franchi has returned to work and the conversion of this great landmark building to apartments and restaurants is under way once again.

## Somerset

After Mayor White and Back Bay civic groups blocked an effort by Boston College to acquire the Somerset, Mr. Franchi acquired the building and began the current innovative conversion and restoration program.

In 1972 two restaurants and a very unusual nightclub were opened. The balance of the building will include 200 luxury apartments now renting.

## Churches

Back Bay includes fourteen churches--some bustling, some empty. In the years ahead some will disappear, others will change form. (See opposite page.)

One of the empty churches is the Mount Vernon Congregational at Massachusetts Avenue and Beacon Street. A proposal to demolish this building and construct a high rise development for elderly tenants is now being considered by community and public agencies.

One of the bustling churches is the First and Second Unitarian Church on Berkeley Street. When the edifice was destroyed by fire, the celebrated architect, Paul Rudolph, was commissioned to design a new building incorporating the old steeple. A new structure was completed and dedicated in the Fall of 1972.

This exciting new building is a busy one. Church services, professional theatre, a nursery school, yoga sessions, community projects of all types--are among the events which make this into a bustling neighborhood center, a kind of model for intown church utilization.

## Schools

There appeared to be a gradual outmigration of schools from Residential Back Bay, promising to ease some of the area's burdens and lessen congestion. In 1972 Boston University dormitories went into conversion for housing and Burdett sold its headquarters for conversion to a residential condominium.

## Lighting

The Public Works Department has commenced the installation of gaslighting along Marlborough Street. By mid 1973 at least two blocks should have been completed and work will continue to the extent that funds are available. Simultaneously, the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay and the Federation have joined with the Public Works Department on a program to design a new lighting system for Commonwealth Avenue. The goal is to install one or two blocks in 1973 and then continue with the job in 1974.

# Theatre staged in church

It's funny how one will probe around and readily admire churches abroad, exclaim at the bare, high-standing Gothic sweep of a Salisbury Cathedral in England or the rich gold-mosaic Byzantine grandeur of a St. Marks in Venice yet be all but totally ignorant of the churches here in Boston.

True our churches are not quite as grand in scale or history as a Notre Dame, Chartres or St. Peter's but as I learned to my embarrassment the other day, they have a charm and dignity distinctly their own and a history most relevant to understanding ourselves and our city.

I am not talking about the traditional New England type churches such as the wood-frame Old North or even its neighbor in the North End, the Bulfinch Federalist-designed St. Stephen's, both of which most of us know and admire, but rather the churches we pass with scarcely a glance; those gray-grimmed edifices which dot the city, particularly in the Back Bay, sometimes squeezed on corners sometimes sandwiched in mid-block.

One such is the Church of the Covenant at the corner of Berkeley and Newbury streets which when completed just over 100 years ago stood magnificently alone, its tall spire, described by Oliver Wendell Holmes as "to my eyes absolutely perfect," reaching 20 feet higher than the Bunker Hill monument across the harbor to the North.

The homes and stores which followed the development of the Back Bay have crowded the perspective of the Church but the impressive 13th century Gothic interior can still be appreciated as can the beautiful Tiffany windows and the massive Tiffany sanctuary lantern, a sculpture in bronze and glass, which was purchased for the Church by Joseph White, brother of Boston merchant R.H. White, following its display in the Tiffany Chapel at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.

But it was the Church of the Covenant whose congregation had dropped from a strong and vital 900 in the early 1930's to a mere 40 in the late 60's which prompted the question: "what will be the fate of these dying churches?"

There are 14 churches in the Back Bay alone, most are still vital. Two are new, one the First and Second Church on Marlborough st. which burned to the ground in 1969 has been rebuilt to the exciting design of Paul Rudolph, and the First Lutheran by Pietro Belluschi which moved to its present site from the South End in 1957.

But some churches may go. They occupy valuable land and they occupy it tax free. The Mount Vernon Church at the corner of Beacon and Mass. av. is now closed, its congregation merged with the Old South in Copley sq.

Fortunately there are men and women in Boston concerned with the fate of these churches and among them is Daniel J. Ahern, executive director of the Back Bay Federation and the Back Bay Association.

Dan shares the belief of a growing number of Bostonians that the best means of preserving antiquities is to use them and in this creed lies the salvation of Boston's attractive but under-utilized churches.

Just last week the Church of the Covenant with a new dynamic minister, Joseph C. Williamson, voted to permit the Theatre Company of Boston to stage Richard III starring Al Pacino of The Godfather in the main church. The company which opens at the Loeb in Cambridge this Saturday will move into the church for performances running from Feb. 3 to March 4. The stage will be dismantled each Saturday night for Sunday services.

Ahern has worked hard to find a home for the Boston Theatre Company in the Back Bay and this coming together of a theatre company with severe financial problems and a church with severe people problems has a nice historic ring . . . didn't theatre first begin in the Church?

One thing's for sure; if the Boston Theatre group can somehow utilize the powerful, reverberating tones of the church's fine organ in some accompaniment to the roaring words of Shakespeare's Richard III under that 100-foot high Gothic roof, the experience could be mind-blowing.



Saint Botolph Street

The change in this neighborhood is truly explosive. There is probably a higher ratio of housing improvement underway than in any other Boston neighborhood. Proximity to Prudential Center, the Church Center, and the Fenway Renewal Project is the principal reason.

The area still has its share of problems--poor lighting, prostitution, theft, etc. However, conditions are improving and the outlook is good.

Responding to suggestions initially from the Federation, BRA planned a public housing project which is now under execution in the area. The 132 units of housing for the elderly will be opened this year.

The Federation also brought rehab specialists into the area, principally the Pilgrim Management Corporation who launched a 130-unit MHFA project which triggered the present rehab boom running throughout the area.

Today there are about 600 units of housing under construction or in the rehab programs. This is equivalent to about 35% of the housing stock in the neighborhood and it is leading to an improved urban neighborhood, diversified by race and economics, in a most convenient location in the city.

Fenway Neighborhood

In 1972 the Federation supported the Fenway Intergroup Agency in a number of actions relative to planning, zoning and housing problems.

At the same time, BBA and the Federation opposed the acquisition of the former Sheraton Biltmore Hotel by the Berklee College of Music and although this opposition was successful before the Board of Appeal, the matter is not yet fully settled.

BBA expects that the matter will be settled under the formula which it devised for the New England School of Law (see page 11) that the School will be accommodated, and that the Back Bay will benefit from additional retail, cultural and housing facilities which will be generated under this agreement.

## Kenmore Area

At the request of the Kenmore Area Action Committee, BBA led the opposition to amusement and liquor licenses for Kenmore Square, and then in November met with Mayor White to request the City and BRA to launch a new comprehensive planning and development program for the Kenmore area. City Officials agreed to this request and a planning program for the long neglected Kenmore area is now under way.



## V

### CULTURAL REVIVAL

The attractiveness and prosperity of the Back Bay depends heavily on the strength of its cultural institutions. 1972 saw the beginning of what could be a very impressive cultural revival.

Boston Public Library: Boston Public Library Addition at Copley Square opened in December, 1972 and is one of the great public libraries in the United States. It is housed in a distinctive new building designed by Philip Johnson.

Institute of Contemporary Art will open its headquarters on Boylston Street opposite the Prudential in late 1973. ICA will convert a handsome and historic building into an exciting facility for the arts - in accordance with a proposal made by BBA.

Architectural Preservation has been very successful in the Back Bay. More than 1000 buildings (six miles of street frontage) are now protected by the Back Bay Architectural Commission. Supporting mall, park and lighting programs are now moving ahead.

Boston Repertory Theatre, a fine professional company, has moved into the First and Second Church for a five-month run extending into June.

Theatre Company of Boston will present a new version of Richard III with an excellent cast in the Church of the Covenant in February.

Commercial Facilities can also qualify as important cultural resources, as the Copley Plaza is currently demonstrating. In time, other retail and entertainment facilities of the Back Bay should reflect the high quality of cultural attractions now developing in this area.

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#### IN REMEMBRANCE

N. Frank Neer, Jr. of the John Hancock Company was for many years a loyal and effective Officer and Director of the Back Bay Association. The Back Bay community was saddened by his passing in January, 1973

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#### ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Front	Cover	Aerial Photos of New England, Inc.
Page	3	Institute of Contemporary Art
	5	Boston Urban Associates
	8	Center Photo Service
	10 L	Frank Doherty
	10 R	Center Photo Service
	12	Boston Street Railway Association
	17	Boston Public Library
	20	John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co.



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Here are some of the exciting plans for the 60th floor observatory in the new John Hancock Tower. See Page 6.

